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THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

MADERA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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CONTEST WINNERS

Winners from North Fork Union School and Coarsegold School in the essay contest dealing with Madera County history, which was sponsored by the Madera County Historical Society and the Coarsegold Farm Bureau, are:

1st Prize		$15.00
Rodney York	North Fork	
Ted Espe	Coarsegold	
2nd Prize		$10.00
Larry Hague	North Fork	
Louie Ramirez	Coarsegold	
3rd Prize		$5.00
Ronald Goode	North Fork	
Crystal Johnson	Coarsegold	

This issue will be given over to Madera County's young historians, including not only the contest winning essays but also others of the many fine entries we received.

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OLD GRANDPA CASCADEL FLUME

by

Rodney York

I have a most unusual story to tell you folks! One day--oh, pardon me. I am getting very old, and so forgetful. I'm always forgetting my manners. I must introduce myself. Most folks refer to me as "The Old Cascadel Flume." My body is about fourteen inches wide and two miles long. I live close to the Cascadel Lodge, down behind the apple orchard.

As I was about to say, something unusual happened to me. The day was light and crisp; the air was cold and brittle; and the baby blue sky was speckled with a couple of puffy white clouds. Who should happen along but a five-year-old tyke, a kindergartner named Brad, I later discovered.

With a quizzical expression, he stared at my rectangular, tar-papered tummy and my cedar ribs. "Whatever can this be?" I heard him question.

I cleared my throat to answer, and actually frightened the poor little fellow! "Why, I'm Grandpa Cascadel Flume. I did not mean to frighten you. I haven't seen anyone in these parts for quite a spell, and I'd love to talk to you!"

"Is that you talking, Grandpa Flume?" Brad asked with interest. "I didn't know flumes could talk!" I had noticed Brad's interest, so I offered to tell him my background.

"In the spring of 1891, the North Fork Lumber Company began to build me." (I had to explain to little Brad that the mill was called Brown's Mill in those days.) "By early spring the next year, the workmen had completed a mile and a half of me. In order to obtain water to come tumbling down me, they built a ditch half a mile long which connected me to Whiskey Creek."

"What did they do with your water?" Brad interrupted.

"Well, son, they wanted water to spray on their logs in order to keep them from rotting. The work was coming along fine--little did I know that it was soon to be halted.

"Mr. Chapin was the owner of Cascadel at that time. Since the Creek ran right through his property, he used it to irrigate his apple trees and his other garden produce. He, of course, objected to me, for I diverted his irrigation water.

"So, Mr. Chapin filed an injunction to prevent Brown's Mill from diverting Whiskey Creek water by means of me. The case was tried by the Superior Court of Fresno."

"The Superior Court?" my young listener asked.

"Yes, that is the highest court in Fresno. This all happened before Fresno County was divided. Now my home is in Madera County.

"The Court ruled in favor of Mr. Chapin. They felt he was within his rights."

Brad perked up. "But what did the Mill decide to do with you?"

"I can't help but remember that time. Since they had no water with which to operate me, the workmen had to desert me."

"You mean they left you to rot?" he asked with concern.

"Yes, that's what happened. Considering my age--I'll be seventy-three in the spring--parts of me are still in fair condition. Would you like to follow me?"

We went along together for about five minutes. Then my little companion saw a pool in the creek by my side.

"Did miners pan for gold here?" he asked excitedly.

"No, I'm afraid not, Brad. The Gold Rush was before my time. I'm not able to recall any left-over miners panning gold here."

The little guy followed me for about a mile. Then I turned into a ditch. He thought I disappeared a couple of times, but he found me again before he had to leave.

"Be sure to come visit me again, Brad," I invited. "And I'd love to have you bring a friend."

I hope you folks enjoyed my story as much as I enjoyed my little visitor, Brad. Parts of me can still be seen, if <u>you</u> would like to come visit me.

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DEADWOOD
by
Ted Espe

On one of the highest mountains in the Sierra foothills lies a grave, an unknown grave.

Years ago when folks had to hunt for a living, all types of wild game were plentiful on this mountain. It was a hunting ground for many people.

One day a man was hunting wild hogs in this area when it became dark and he was unable to find his way home. He probably had hiked to the top of the mountain to see in which direction to go, when he was suddenly attacked by wild hogs. It was told that neighbors heard him yelling for help in a frightful manner.

Early the next morning a group formed a search party and went

looking for him. Only his bones, left by the wild hogs, were found. These they buried under a lone oak tree, which later died, and the mountain became known as Deadwood.

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CENTRAL CAMP--YESTERDAY AND TODAY

by
Larry Hague

Central camp is about 18 miles from North Fork in Madera County. It was a very busy and bustling site. I said "was" because today it is a very quiet place lying still in one of the mountain meadows.

Central Camp used to be a logging camp. Men would cut the timber and then it would be hauled away to sawmills by a train.

Before a train could take the logs away, it had to have rails to go on. Laying rails and ties is not an easy job. Especially when you have somewhere around 150 miles of it to lay.

Yes, 150 miles from Central Camp to the sawmills--150 miles is a long way for a train like that.

Yet, despite the many delays and other happenings, the work went along. The company usually cut about 800,000 feet of lumber a day. That was between the years 1923 to 1930.

Electrical power came to Central Camp in the year 1922. This helped a great deal. Many things were run by electrical power. Yarders and loaders and also a portable slope hoist, all of these were run by electrical power.

The slope hoist was used to raise and lower cars and locomotives up and down the slopes.

The trains were assembled at Central Camp. It would go down the mountain and up over Bass Lake Dam. The railroad went west of a town called North Fork. It followed the Finegold Creek and on past Friant to a mill in Pinedale.

Sugar Pine, the Minarets and the Western and Southern Pacific Railroad Companies brought the logs down.

The store in Central Camp is owned and managed by Mrs. Vaud Cunningham and her two children, Florence and Edgar. Mrs. Cunningham's deceased husband was John E. Norby.

Mr. Norby built over 60 of the railroad trestles in the area. He was the construction superintendent of the Sugar Pine Lumber Company.

Central Camp today is not a very booming place. The loggers still work around Central Camp but they haul logs on trucks today. The old railroad grade is now part of the road that winds up the mountain to Central Camp.

Many families have cabins up at Central Camp. Most all of the cabins are occupied during the summer.

Central Camp is a good place to go camping during the summertime. You can go fishing if you're a fisherman. There are some good sized trout in the mountain streams around there. Most of the fish around there are natives, but you can catch planters too.

There is one thing that most people go up there for and that is deer hunting. People from Fresno, Los Angeles and all over the State come up to go hunting.

Central Camp is like a central point. When the people hit Central Camp they spread out and start hunting. Even though people try to spread out and get away from others they always see hunters no matter how far they go.

THE STINK-BUG AND THE COYOTE
by
Louie Ramirez

It was a lonely day and quiet. A stink-bug thought he might come out to eat from under a rock where he lived. Just then along came a very hungry, skinny coyote. When the stink-bug saw the coyote coming, he raised his hind legs against a big, big rock.

The coyote yelled out to him. "Hey, what are you doing there? I haven't had anything to eat all day but you, and I just love stink-bugs."

The stink-bug replied, "You cannot eat me. I am very important. Can't you see what I am doing?"

The coyote said, "You can't fool me. I am going to eat you anyhow."

"Oh no!" cried the stink-bug. "If you eat me the whole world will fall and kill us both. I am holding it up with my legs, so please don't eat me."

The coyote let him go, but the stink-bug had just fooled the coyote because he knew that the coyote would have eaten him.

That is why all the stink-bugs to this day raise their bodies if they think something is going to eat them.

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THE MONO INDIANS OF TODAY
by
Ronald Goode

There are at least three main parts to the Indian tribe. One section of them is in Auberry; there is another section of them in Friant; and of course here in North Fork. A good number of them stay on a reservation. The rest of the Indians who aren't on reservations are someplace scattered throughout America.

The language of the Mono, which is one of the hardest languages, is easier to understand than to speak. Most children are taught the language when they are young and learn more as they grow up. Some never learn it.

The Indians still eat the food they used to eat. There are some people who have learned to like the food and some who don't like it. The food of the Mono Indians isn't only eaten by them. There are other Indian tribes who eat about the same food. The food the Monos eat usually can't be planted. They go out and get it, which is hard to get if a family lives far away from where they might find the food. And when they get it, most of it must be cleaned and then cooked before eating it. Some people try to go out and get the food. For instance, they will try to get mushroom and end up with the wrong kind and are most likely poisoned by it when they eat it.

The Mono Indians still have their customs, which they have kept in the past centuries. Some still have the skill for weaving baskets. They still have powwows, sing their songs and have their beliefs. Some never really develop a good idea about the modern age.

One of the ceremonies still held by them is a powwow, which is given when a person dies in a family. Then it is given again a year later, after a little mourning. This powwow now is called a Fan Dangle Powwow. After the Fan Dangle Powwow is given the family can go on and live happily again. The length of a powwow is unlimited. Most powwows last for at least two or three days. There have been shorter and longer powwows.

There is another powwow given

MONO INDIANS OF TODAY (cont.)

when songs are sung to scare away the ghosts for someone who says ghosts have been bothering him. There are different songs for different things. The songs sung for this powwow are only supposed to be sung at this time; if sung some other time it is supposed to be a bad sign. There are songs for the day and night. There is a song sung for hand games.

Most of the songs sung to scare away the ghosts are just superstitions. Lots of the beliefs are superstitions. But still some of the beliefs of the Indians are probably true, like the different kinds of ghosts coming to their homes. For all of these things the Indians had a name. When someone would say there were ghosts bothering him, someone would come down and sing certain songs to him which were supposed to scare the ghosts away. The person who sings the songs is not just anyone. It is a certain person.

Even though the Mono Indians have kept their beliefs and superstitions, they are learning to adopt the white man's ways.

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HOW THE TOOTH-ACHE STARTED
by
Crystal Johnson

Well now, let me tell you a story that my grandpa told me long ago about how the tooth-ache started.

Once there lived a bear, and an Indian lived about a mile away from where the bear lived. One day the Indian was walking by the cave when the bear smelled him and started chasing the Indian who climbed upon a rock that he knew the bear couldn't climb. The bear was so mad he started chewing on the rock. He chewed and chewed until his teeth began to ache. That is how the tooth-ache started.

EARLY LOGGING IN THE SIERRAS IN 1918
by
Kathy Morley

Throughout my life I have seen many things but the one item that stands out is the early logging in the Sierras.

When I was a small child I used to go with my father when he went to work and watch the men felling trees. This was a very tedious job and only the best men were allowed to climb the trees. Father's job was climbing the trees, which he liked very much.

First of all, a man would climb to the top of a tree and measure approximately eight to ten feet down. He would then place a mark at this point, climb down the tree, get a saw, climb back up the tree to the place he had marked and saw off the top of the tree. The treetop would then be stripped of its branches and bark. This material would then be spread out across the area in which the tree would supposedly fall. This was done to serve as a "cushion" so that the tree would not break up when it hit the ground after such a long, hard fall. After the trees were fallen they were stripped of their branches and bark, cables were attached to them and they were pulled on a "donkey engine" or by donkey teams. They were then hauled to the mills.

The mills were on top of Peckinpah Mountain between Shuteye Mountain and Ellis Meadow. (Peckinpah Mountain was named after Mr. David Peckinpah and his family. The Peckinpah Mills were also named after Mr. Peckinpah.) These mills were fairly small. Some of the larger mills employed about 50 to 100 men. These mills were designed to make material for wooden trays or shakes. These wooden trays were used to dry grapes and other fruits. Several types of wood were used in making the trays. The shake material was bundled together into two huge freight wagons to be

taken down the mountain. This material was then distributed throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

When I was a little girl the part that I loved the most was going down the mountain in the freight wagons. The freight wagons were pulled by two huge, muscular horses and eight to ten mules. The two horses were hooked together next to the wagons and they were mainly used to help start the load. They were called "wheelers."

The two head mules must have been very intelligent for they had to lead the freight wagons down the mountain curves. They were called "leaders." One of the things that they had to learn was that when they came to a left turn in the road they had to jump the tongue to the left so that the other mules would turn left also. The same thing applied to the leaders when there was a right turn in the road.

Coming down the mountain the leaders always had a string of bells on a wire fastened on their harness to warn people on the road that they were coming down the mountain. There was so much dust and dirt flying around that this was all that they could do.

Another device that they used was a log that they would cut down and chain to the back of the wagons to serve as a brake going down the mountain curves.

After coming down the mountain the shake material was unloaded from the freight wagons and loaded on the freight trains to be distributed throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Compare the logging of today with that of 1918 and you will find a tremendous difference I am sure. Many boys were always seen coming up the mountain driving a wagon. They were usually nine, ten, and eleven years old.

NORTH FORK
by
John Broquist

The small, sleepy settlement of North Fork was not developed until the middle of the 1870's when Peckinpahs built the first road up Peckinpah Mountain. Due to the gold mining along Finegold Creek and around O'Neals, this was where the postoffice and meeting place for miners, ranchers and lumbermen was established. It is presently used for the same purpose. North Fork was not really established. Houses just popped up all over the area. The first house, however, was built back of Weatherly's store in the early 1870's and is standing today. The name North Fork probably derived from Willow Creek. The creek runs just back of North Fork and it is the north fork of Willow Creek.

Its present population is approximately 200 citizens but its school district is 2500, encompassing the area from the San Joaquin River, Bass Lake Annex to Cascadel.

The first activity to be seen in this area was in the summer when sheep and cattle were driven through what is now North Fork to the high country to graze. In the fall, the herdsmen sometimes burned off the brush and debris behind them as they brought the animals back down to their home range. The Valley people seeing the smoke in the mountains knew winter was on its way.

In 1897 the San Joaquin Light and Power, a small operation, had a little stone building, that still stands, near the new Wishon Power House. This company took care of North Fork and also supplied Fresno with its power. In those days little power was needed so this small company could easily accommodate both towns.

The Indians here in North Fork are from the Mono Tribe and are believed to have migrated to the Minarets area from the Piute Tribe.

Some of them intermarried with white men and soon migrated to the area of North Fork exclusively. One well known family is the Kinsmens and some descendents of this family live in this area today. There are other tribes close by but their customs and languages are different.

The stage service started the same time North Fork started to grow. It was horse and wagon until the mill on Peckinpah started its railroad. The railroad was required to carry passengers, even if it was just in the caboose, to be able to get their right-of-way. Later, approximately 1915, two model T's took over the stage line and it is the same family who runs the stage line today. In 1922 a bus service started from Fresno through Auberry to North Fork, up the #222 Road, on to Yosemite and returning to Fresno every day. This bus remained in service for approximately two years.

The many sparkling streams flowing down the sloping hills of the Sierra tumble into the man-made lakes which encircle North Fork. Bass Lake, the summer resort attraction; Little Manzanita, frequently stocked with trout; Redinger Lake and Kerckhoff Lake are all frequented by the "flatlanders" looking for relaxation. Many hunters, fishermen and vacationers travel through North Fork, up the Mammoth Road to enjoy their particular sport in the Sierras high above.

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OLD LAKE LOOKS BACK

by

David Mayer

(Many oldtimers around the rural area of Bass Lake will never forget the foundation of Bass Lake. If they told you it would make a very interesting story. The lake itself is in Madera County in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Its elevation is about 3000 feet above sea level)

I can still remember the first day when I was a small valley in the mountains called Crane Valley. I was named after the waterfowl called crane.

Many men and animals started clearing trees and hauling them out of the valley. As I remember, after clearing all of the trees they started building a small schoolhouse for the local children around the valley. Still other men were building the dam across a small stream no bigger than a trickle. It took a great deal of effort and strain to build me.

As I remember, many wagons drawn by powerful horses pulled the heavy rock and gravel. Hardworking men had to crush the rock by hand tools. After great sweat, strain, and bitterness I was finished. It took many weary months.

After I was completed there was a band of sheep that was herded across the dam twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, to try to pack the gravel, rock and earth.

I was founded in the beginning of the twentieth century. To this day I'm almost seventy years old.

Now let's look back a little earlier into the history. If I remember right my valley was used for an Indian campground. Every time the Indians from the high Sierra came to trade with the lowland Indians they used to camp there overnight. Even to this day if you look around my area you can find historical Indian relics.

All the time when I was young I had a very dear friend who was a good worker. Every day at a certain time I could hear my friend's "Puff Puff" sound. My friend was the old Sugar Pine

OLD LAKE LOOKS BACK (Continued)

Mill's train which hauled a great many logs.

Today I am very old, but today great machinery is replacing animals and man power. Today in the summertime thousands of people come from all over the State to enjoy the recreation. Besides the recreation, my water is used for electric power to supply electricity for Central California.

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OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS OF THE SIERRA
by
Carolyn Heron

There are many beautiful animals in the Sierra. One of them, for instance, is the mule deer. His ears are always in action. As a matter of fact, he is named for his mule-like ears. When he is alarmed his ears are erect and forward and when he is angry his mule ears are flattened and sideways.

The babies or fawns are born in late May or early June. The doe hides its fawns for safety, and they must not move until the mother calls them. The fawns have a reddish coat with white spots. This coat is called a "protective coloration."

Deer are browsers. The mule deer likes twigs, buds, and leaves--also acorns and grass.

The male deer is called a "buck." The buck grows antlers. He sheds them in the winter and grows a new set in the spring. The antlers are used for fighting. Man and mountain lion are the buck's greatest enemies.

The bobcat is another beautiful animal of the Sierra. He is very graceful in his movements and looks like a big house cat. He hunts for his food in the day. He catches birds, ground squirrels, mice, and other harmful rodents. The mother will not let anyone come near the babies, not even the father. The kittens are born in late spring. Although the bobcat is not at home in trees, he will climb them in danger. The jays and other birds warn of his approach.

As small as he is, the deer mouse is a very interesting little creature. He is a very clean animal. When the babies are born they learn how to wash themselves before their eyes are open. The deer mouse coat is brown on the top and white underneath. The feet are white and for this reason he is sometimes called a white-footed mouse. He is very active at night and his large eyes help him to find his way in the dark. He likes seeds, and human food.

The flying squirrel is quite interesting because he glides instead of flying. He is light gray, and almost white on the underside. He seldom goes out in daylight.

From these four animals--the mule deer, the bobcat, the deer mouse and the flying squirrel--we learn quite a lot about our animal friends of the Sierra.

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In order to include as many as possible of these excellent essays, some of them have not been printed in their entirety.

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